



312066 0271 3066 7

POLICY ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS
COLLECTION

JUN 22 1987

University of Massachusetts
Depository Copy

Massachusetts Board of Education

January 1986

MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mr. James F. Crain, Gloucester, *Chairperson*
Rev. Paul V. Garrity, Lowell, *Vice Chairperson*

Ms. Milca R. Gonzalez, Shrewsbury
Mr. James R. Grande, Hanover
Mr. Joseph E. Killory, Sandwich
Mr. Sol Kolack, Newton
Mrs. Anne S. Larkin, Bedford
Mrs. Loretta L. Roach, Boston
Mr. Joseph C. Savery, Lee
Mr. Sam H. Silverstein, Lincoln
Ms. Mary Ellen Smith, Boston
Mrs. Mary C. Wright, Falmouth

Mr. Harold Raynolds, Jr., *Commissioner of Education, Secretary*

Mr. Franklyn G. Jenifer, *Chancellor, Board of Regents, Ex Officio*

Photo Credits

Photos on pages 1, 5, 8, 9 by Subject and Predicates

Photos on pages 6, 11, 12, 14 by Cheryl Hardcastle

Graphic Design by Jennifer Coles

Produced by the Bureau of Operational Support
Cecilia M. DiBella, *Director*
Susan Gardner, *Publications/Communications Coordinator*
Susan M. Stille, *Typographer*

The Massachusetts Department of Education insures equal employment/educational opportunities/affirmative action regardless of race, color, creed, national origin or sex, in compliance with Title IV and Title IX, or handicap, in compliance with section 504.

Publication of this Document Approved By Daniel D. Carter,
State Purchasing Agent.

24-12-86-810331 Est. cost per copy \$.45

POLICY ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Submitted to the Board of Education
January 1986

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	1
I. Introduction	2
II. Policy Statement	4
III. Goals, Objectives and Implementation Steps	5
Appendices	
A. Types of Early Childhood Programs Available in Massachusetts Public Schools During the 1984-1985 School Year	10
B. Types of Financial Assistance Available for Child Care in Massachusetts	11
C. Excerpt from Chapter 188 of the Acts of 1985 (Public School Improvement Act) Early Childhood Grant Program	12
D. Glossary	14



Foreword

Between October 1984 and May 1985 a statewide task force on early childhood education examined early childhood issues and developed policy recommendations for the Board of Education. At its meeting on June 25, 1985, the Board received the final report of the Task Force and directed the Commissioner to develop a policy statement. Less than a month later, the Legislature passed the Public School Improvement Act of 1985, which authorized the State Board of Education to establish an Office of Early Childhood Education within the Department of Education, administer an early childhood discretionary grant program and appoint a statewide Early Childhood Advisory Council.

The Board recognizes that many excellent early education programs both public and private already exist. Since the passage of Chapter 766 in 1974, school districts have been required to provide programs and services for three- and four-year-old children with special needs. Approximately 3,500 handicapped children were served over each of the last five years. During the 1984-85 school year Chapter 1, a federally funded program for educationally deprived children, provided services to some 1,519 prekindergarten children. In a survey administered to local school districts in October 1984, 211 public schools and 207 private schools reported having one or more early childhood education programs for nonspecial needs students in the building. Under the new legislation it is expected that these programs will proliferate.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to school district staff in planning and implementing high quality early childhood education programs.

Rationale

Reports of the findings of several carefully controlled longitudinal studies have documented specific significant, longterm benefits of early childhood education to children, their families and society (e.g., Weikart, et al., *Changed Lives*, 1984; Pierson, et al., *A School-Based Program from Infancy to Kindergarten for Children and Their Parents*, 1984). Moreover, parent education and involvement were found to be among the vital components of effective early childhood education programs. Perhaps the most compelling finding was that good early education programs are positively correlated with a child's future success and reduce the need for more costly services later on.

One of the most influential forces shaping the demand for early childhood education programs is the growing number of working mothers. Currently, nearly half of all women with children under age six are in the labor force. By 1990 this figure is expected to increase to 60 percent. The fastest growing group of working mothers have children under the age of three.

In addition, the number of single parents is increasing. In 1981, 12.6 million children lived in a single-parent family. Within the next decade it is estimated that half of all children in the United States will spend a significant part of their lives in a single-parent family. Clearly, single parents with young children will need assistance in providing programs and services for their children.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the number of three- and four-year-old children enrolled in early childhood education programs increased between 1970 and 1982 from 21 percent to 36 percent. The number is expected to rise markedly during the next decade.

In 1983 one-fifth of all American children under the age of three were living in families with incomes below the poverty line. By 1984 this figure had risen to one-fourth (Bronfenbrenner, *The Three Worlds of Childhood*, 1984). The families of these children have fewer resources to share with their children than do middle and upper income families. To some extent, taking into consideration child and family characteristics, resources translate into developmental outcomes (Weikart, et al., *Changed Lives*, 1984).



The **Early Childhood Education Task Force Report** stated:

While the need for early childhood education has been generally acknowledged, several major concerns need to be addressed in the Commonwealth.

1. Early childhood programs and services lack adequate funding, which leads to disparities in educational opportunity.
2. High quality early childhood development programs and services for young children and their families are scarce.
3. Early childhood programming is taking place under a variety of auspices causing a fragmentation of services.
4. The lack of uniform program standards results in inconsistent program quality.
5. While a Department of Education certificate exists for teachers of young children with special needs (3 to 7 years old), no Department of Education certificate exists for teachers of other groups of children below the kindergarten level.
6. Low salaries make it difficult to attract and retain qualified personnel.¹

Major Premises

The Task Force developed three major premises:

1. Programs and services should be developmentally oriented.
2. Families should be involved in decisions affecting their children and play integral roles in programs and services.
3. All children and their families should have equal access and equal opportunity to participate in early childhood programs and services.²

Definition

Based on these premises and on the recommendation of the Task Force, the Board of Education endorses the following definition:

Early childhood covers the critical learning period from birth through age eight years. Early childhood education describes developmentally oriented programs and services designed to meet the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive needs of children in this age range. Such programs emphasize family involvement and offer a variety of learning experiences and services to insure that children have an equal opportunity to develop their potentials.

¹Early Childhood Education Task Force Report, June 1985, p. 2.

II. Policy Statement

Since early childhood experiences lay the foundation for learning and determine a child's future success in school, the Massachusetts Board of Education commits itself to expanding the availability of voluntary³ public early childhood learning and development programs for children and their families regardless of race, ethnic background, gender, religion, place of residence, or handicap. Learning activities should be appropriate to the individual and developmental characteristics of the young child, and programs and services should meet standards developed by the Board. All programs and services should be developed in consultation with other agencies that serve young children.

³Below the mandated school age.



III. Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Steps

The Board of Education has formulated the following goals and objectives for its policy on early childhood education.

GOALS

1. Assist each child to develop the fundamental social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills which form an essential foundation for lifelong learning.
2. Insure that programs for young children are designed and implemented to foster development appropriate for the individual child and age level.
3. Guarantee the right of equal access and equal opportunity to early childhood learning and development programs for all children and their families in the Commonwealth.
4. Increase the availability of high quality early childhood education programs and services throughout the Commonwealth.
5. Assure continuity of developmentally oriented programs and services from the early childhood level through kindergarten and primary grades.
6. Insure interagency and intra-agency coordination of early childhood resources, programs and services for children—birth through age eight—to guarantee the availability of a comprehensive set of services.
7. Foster collaboration among day care and other early childhood education programs.
8. Expand certification requirements—including training to work with families—for all early childhood education personnel.
9. Promote the inclusion of early childhood education personnel in the professional and salary structures of public school teachers and other employees in order to retain and attract qualified staff.
10. Insure the involvement of families in decisions affecting their children and in program activities.



OBJECTIVES

Administration

1. To establish an office of early childhood education within the Department of Education.
2. To develop and implement a plan for carrying out the specific responsibilities of this policy and the Public School Improvement Act (See Appendix C).

Implementation Steps

- A. In consultation with all program divisions and offices within the Department, the Office will develop a plan for internal coordination of department resources and programs that serve young children.
 - B. The Office of Early Childhood Education will administer the early childhood discretionary grant program authorized under the Public School Improvement Act, 1985.
 - C. The Office will carry out a statewide needs assessment to assess existing resources, gather pertinent statewide demographic data, and to establish the dimensions of program needs. The needs assessment will be conducted every five years.
 - D. The Office will assist local school districts:
 1. to determine local needs;
 2. to identify a variety of funding sources, and to develop a mechanism for equitable distribution;
 3. to plan and implement early childhood education programs and family education programs;
 4. to identify early childhood resources and expertise in the local community and in the state.
 - E. The Office will publicize information about the importance and cost effectiveness of early childhood education.
3. To initiate the development of a plan to provide state and local level coordination among various state agencies that provide programs and services for young children.

Implementation

The Office will identify appropriate agencies and gain their commitment:

- to participate in the planning process, and
- to develop a framework for coordination which can be replicated at the local level.



Program Development

1. To insure consistent quality of early childhood education programs throughout the Commonwealth.

Implementation Steps

- A. The Board of Education, in consultation with a statewide advisory council, will establish developmentally oriented standards for early childhood education programs.
 - B. The Office will provide assistance to existing programs in meeting the new standards.
2. Based on the statewide needs assessment, to develop incentives that will encourage underserved communities to establish early childhood education programs in order to increase access. Programs may include but are not limited to the following three areas:⁴
 - a) early childhood education programs for three- and four-year-old children;
 - b) enhanced kindergarten and transitional first grade classes⁵; and
 - c) programs which seek to develop creative approaches to combining early childhood education and day care.

⁴These areas are specified in Chapter 188 of the Acts of 1985

⁵Once developmental programs (early childhood to primary level) are established, transitional first grade classes will no longer be needed.

3. To develop technical assistance programs that aid local school districts in designing, implementing, and improving early childhood education programs.

Implementation

The Early Childhood Education Office will:

- provide leadership in the development and dissemination of early childhood education curricula, which will include curricula for bilingual, English as a Second Language, special needs, and gifted and talented programs;
- provide technical assistance to school districts through the Department's regional offices with priority given to programs serving low income sites as determined by the Board;
- assist school districts to coordinate with other agencies and groups that serve young children;
- encourage early childhood staff to collaborate with existing resources and support personnel with their schools when planning and implementing early childhood education programs. (Support personnel includes school psychologists, speech teachers, bilingual teachers, etc.)
- assist school districts to coordinate with primary (early elementary) programs to insure that the developmental process begun at the early childhood level is continued through the kindergarten and primary grades;
- develop training materials that can be used by school district staff in making presentations on the developmental approach.
- assist school districts to develop integrated programs for handicapped and nonhandicapped students;
- identify exemplary programs and disseminate information about such programs.



Family Involvement

To foster meaningful family involvement that begins in the child's early childhood years and continues throughout the child's school career.

Implementation Steps

- A. The Board of Education will require early childhood education programs receiving grant funding to have a parent involvement component.
- B. The Office will encourage local school districts to develop parent education programs; to communicate regularly with parents and to provide opportunities for parents to be involved in the classroom program.

Staff Qualifications

1. To insure that all early childhood staff have appropriate qualifications based on training and experience.

Implementation Steps

- A. The Board of Education will establish a certificate for teachers of three- and four-year-old children without special needs. Requirements will include training to work with families in addition to appropriate child development courses and a practicum.
 - B. After the early childhood teacher certification is developed, the Board will establish a timetable for requiring school districts to hire certified teachers for early childhood education programs. The certification requirement will also apply to teachers who are reassigned from upper grades to early childhood education classrooms.⁶
 - C. The Department will assist local school districts in the development and implementation of inservice training programs for principals, other administrators, classroom teachers, aides and other building personnel⁷ who work with young children.
 - D. The Office will encourage local school districts to offer cross-cultural awareness sessions for school staff.
2. To promote continuing high quality classroom performance through teacher and administrator evaluations that are consistent with the provisions of the Public School Improvement Act.

Implementation

Upon request, the Office will assist local school districts to develop teacher and administrator evaluation procedures.

⁶Declining enrollments inevitably result in shifts in teaching assignments.

⁷Includes cafeteria workers, school nurse, bus drivers, custodians, etc.

Evaluation

To insure that school districts design and implement evaluation procedures to assess the progress of the individual child as well as the effectiveness of the program.

Implementation Steps

- A. The Office will assist school districts to develop instruments and procedures for the evaluation of individual children that are consistent with the principles of child development.
- B. The Office will assist school districts to develop procedures that will allow for formative and summative evaluation of early childhood education programs.
- C. Based on evaluation results, the Office will assist school districts to individualize their early childhood education programs:
 1. to meet the needs of each individual child; and
 2. to adapt the program to meet the needs of participating children and their families.
- D. The Office will monitor programs to insure that they meet program standards.
- E. The Office will develop evaluation procedures for assessing innovative programs.

The Director of the Office of Early Childhood Education will give an annual report to the Board of Education on the status of early childhood education in Massachusetts, emerging trends, and anticipated funding needs. The Department of Education will review the Policy on Early Childhood Education every five years and recommend any changes to the Board of Education.



Appendix A

Types of Early Childhood Education Programs Available in Massachusetts Public Schools During the 1984-85 School Year

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 is a federally funded program for educationally deprived children. To be eligible for funding, a school district must identify an eligible pool of disadvantaged children who reside in the elementary school district. Chapter 1 programs must be supplementary to existing services and be based on an assessment of educational needs. Chapter 1 programs offer a variety of enrichment activities and encourage parent involvement.

Prekindergarten/Nursery School

Prekindergarten programs in public schools may be funded by the local school committee, community or parents. Administration, staffing and school involvement vary accordingly. In some programs, not administered by the local school, the school may provide some services such as transportation, lunches, invitations to school programs, services of the school nurse, social worker, psychologist and guidance counselor.

Nursery School Program in High School Setting

Nursery school programs provide experiential training to high school students enrolled in a child development course. Although most are originally funded by occupational education grants, many school districts continue to support these programs after the initial funding ends. Parent tuition helps to defray program costs.

Head Start

Head Start is a federally funded comprehensive early childhood education program that provides educational, social, medical, nutritional, mental health, and special needs services to young children from low income families meeting federal government poverty guidelines. The goal is to insure that parents have the support needed to be the primary educators of their young children. To this end, the program focuses on the total family. Ten percent of Head Start's total enrollment must be children with documented special needs.

Special Education

Chapter 766 mandates that each local education agency provide appropriate services for all handicapped children, aged 3 to 21, in the least restrictive environment. Since 1975 the Division of Special Education has assisted school districts in developing and/or improving early childhood special education programs. The Division encourages local school districts to collaborate with other early childhood providers.

Day Care

Day care provides a range of early childhood experiences and services that include daily educational activities, social services, health and nutrition programs, parent involvement, and staff training. Most day care programs operate ten hours a day, 250 days a year and offer full- or part-time care. Outside of the public school setting approximately 120,000 children were served in licensed day care centers and family day care homes regulated by the Office for Children.

Bilingual

Programs are targeted to four-year-old children whose native language is other than English. Emphasis is placed on language development in the child's native language. The child is also exposed to English. Communication with parents in their native language is an important component of this program.

Integrated

Handicapped and nonhandicapped children share the same learning environment. The nonhandicapped children serve as peer role models.



Appendix B

Types of Financial Assistance Available for Child Care in Massachusetts⁸

DSS Contracted Day Care

The Department of Social Services (DSS) contracts with day care centers and family day care systems to provide day care for low income families. A sliding fee scale based on income is used. Contracted care may also include special needs or protective care.

Vouchers

Parents who are participating in the state's Employment and Training Program are eligible for day care subsidy under the Voucher Day Care Program.

Chapter 766

Chapter 766 insures that young children ages three and four with special needs are identified, evaluated, and provided with appropriate educational services by their local school district. The Department of Education receives approximately \$1,950,000 every three years from the U.S. Department of Education to assist local school districts in meeting their mandate.

Head Start

Project Head Start, a community-based child development program, provides comprehensive services and preschool programs for young children from low income families. Families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) are automatically eligible. Others are eligible if the child has a disability or the family is at or below a certain income level.

Tuition Assistance Plan

With funding from United Way, the Child Care Resource and Referral Center has launched a pilot program in Cambridge and Somerville. Financial assistance is offered to income eligible families with work related day care needs.

Federal Tax Credit for Child Care and Dependent Care

Families can claim a tax credit on their federal taxes based on a sliding scale: 30 percent credit for a total annual income of \$10,000 or less; 20 percent credit for income of \$30,000 or above. To be eligible parents must be employed or actively seeking work.

Massachusetts Tax Deduction for Child Care

Parents who qualify for the federal child care tax credit can claim this state deduction as long as the earned income is reported on the Massachusetts tax return. Parents can deduct up to \$2,400 for one child and \$4,800 for two or more.

⁸The Child Care Resource Center, Inc., September, 1984

Appendix C

Excerpt from Chapter 188 of the Acts of 1985 (Public School Improvement Act)

Early Childhood Program

M.G.L. Chapter 15, Section 54. The Board shall establish an early childhood discretionary grant program.

The Board annually may award grants to school committees to develop innovative early childhood education programs in the following three areas: prekindergarten programs for three- and four-year-old children, enhanced kindergarten and transitional first grade classes, and programs that seek to develop creative approaches to combining early childhood education and day care. Such combined programs may include, but not be limited to, extended day programs and day care programs in schools. In the case of transitional classrooms, no child shall be required to participate in such classroom beyond age six without the permission of parents or guardians. Programs approved under the provisions of this section shall be funded for a two-year period, subject to appropriation.

At least 75 percent of the funds appropriated for grants awarded under this section shall be allocated to programs serving low income sites, as determined by the Board. Criteria for determining what constitutes a low income site shall include, but not be limited to, the same criteria which are used to qualify schools for Chapter 1 of the Federal Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981.

Funds under this provision shall be used to assist current prekindergarten programs or to supplement and establish new programs in prekindergarten, kindergarten and transitional first grade.

The Board shall establish standards for pre-kindergarten programs that meet or exceed the existing Office for Children standards for programs serving three- and four-year-old children in whole and half day programs.



School committees applying for funds under this grant program shall appoint an advisory council comprised of a principal, teacher, parent, a member of the local resource and referral agency, and others with experience in the care and education of young children. Council members shall be broadly representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of the community. The council shall develop a proposal for funds which shall be approved by the school committee.

School committees may contract with other public and private agencies for services, provided that any teacher employed by the contracting school committee in prekindergarten, kindergarten, and transitional first grade classes is not displaced as a result of such contract.

Proposals describing linkages with other human service agencies and seeking to combine a number of funding sources shall be given priority by the Board. Other agencies and programs may include, but are not limited to, state and federal nutrition programs, public health programs, and state funded day care programs.

Applications for said grants shall include the following: a statement of need, a description of unmet needs and existing resources, program objectives and implementation plan, evaluation and dissemination components, contractual arrangements with other public or private agencies. Applications shall also describe how such programs will interact with programs for children with special needs.

The Board shall establish an early childhood office which shall have the following functions: developing program standards for early childhood programs, providing technical assistance to school committees, conducting program evaluations, and, jointly with the Bureau of Teacher Certification, developing certification standards for early childhood teachers.

The Board shall appoint a state advisory council on early childhood education. Members of the advisory council may include, but are not limited to, teachers, parents, representatives of state human service agencies, day care agencies, higher education, business, labor, and government. Council members shall be broadly representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of the Commonwealth. The advisory council shall be charged with conducting a comprehensive study of future trends in early childhood education and day care, including the provision of services to children from birth to age three, and shall report their findings to the Board by January first, nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and each year thereafter. In addition, the advisory council shall review early childhood program evaluations, certification, and program standards, and make recommendations to the Board on needed program changes. The Board shall report on the progress of the early childhood grant program and make recommendations to the general court by filing the same with the clerk of the house of representatives and the clerk of the senate on or before June thirtieth, of each year.

Appendix D

Glossary

High Quality Early Childhood Programs

The National Association for the Education of Young Children defines a high quality early childhood program as one which provides a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children.

Developmental Appropriateness

Developmentally appropriate educational experiences are both age appropriate and individually appropriate.

1. *Age-appropriateness.* Human development research indicates that there are universal, predictable sequences of growth and change that occur in children during the first 9 years of life. These predictable changes occur in all domains of development—physical, emotional, social, and cognitive. Knowledge of typical development of children within the age span served by the program provides a framework from which teachers prepare the learning environment and plan appropriate experiences.
2. *Individual appropriateness.* Each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style, and family background. Both the curriculum and adults' interactions with children should be responsive to individual differences. Learning in young children is the result of interaction between the child's thoughts and experiences with materials, ideas, and people. These experiences should match the child's developing abilities, while also challenging the child's interest and understanding.

⁹This excerpt is from the National Association for the Education of Young Children's September 1986 Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs.



